Room for improvement with ‘Lucy’

By Jeremy Miller

“Lucy” is the latest from writer/director Luc Besson (“The Family”, “The Fifth Element”) starring Scarlett Johansson, Morgan Freeman, and Min-sik Choi.

Lucy (Johansson) is an American girl caught on the wrong side of a deal in Japan. What starts as a menial delivery of goods to the upper echelon of the Japanese mafia suddenly turns to harboring the latest in synthetic street drugs inside her stomach. Upon arrival she’s held in captivity and a disgruntled mob employee takes his day out on her, rupturing the bag inside. The drugs leak out in mass amounts and begin to unlock the potential of her mind on a gradient, ultimately hitting 100 percent.



The Miller Meter – 21/2 out of 5



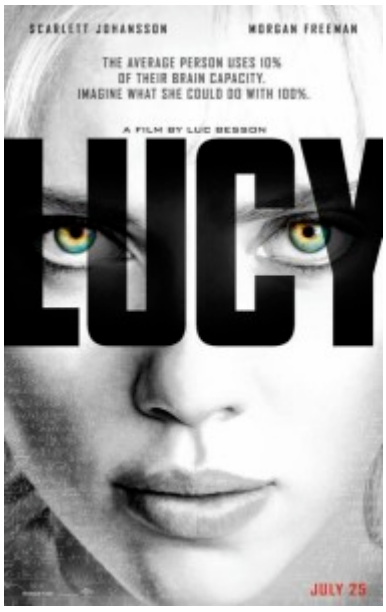
Simultaneously Professor Norman (Freeman) is giving an eager crowd a breakdown of what exactly would take place should someone tap into a higher percentage of their brain power than 10 percent. He breaks it down on a gradient as to what the mind is capable of as the higher percentages are reached, and supplies some awesome video clips in the background so we really get it. As he narrates with the all-too-famous

narrative voice of his, we see Lucy slowly fading further from her human self and closer toward an overly powerful being of unsaid potential.

She decides that with her new evolved abilities she's going to seek vengeance on those who put her in this pickle. She quickly discovers her abilities to control radio waves, electricity, and eventually matter. As she taps into higher percentages of brain function, she decides that she better let someone in on her little secret, so she calls the professor and showboats a bit until he believes her.

As she taps into more abilities she loses more of her persona, more of her humanity slips away and her end game moves further from vengeance and more toward how she will survive and pass on all that she's learned.

Great premise, but it sounds familiar. Oh, that's right! Neil Burger did this same thing in 2011 but with Bradley Cooper and called it "Limitless".



Lucy was fun at times, and engaging no doubt. The action scenes were short and simple, and fell short of what I would expect from a real life combination of all the Marvel heroes in a femme fatal like Scarlett Jo. The effects were as abstract as one could imagine given that no one really knows what would happen should someone use 100 percent of their brain. It tapped into all kinds of theological and spiritual themes, subtly, which was nice. I enjoyed exploring the thoughts and the "what ifs?" of it all, but felt like the film didn't give nearly as much as it could have.

"Limitless" was just so much more fun.

Scarlett was as impressive as she usually is. I don't think

she’s terrible by any means, I just think that a role with minimal dialogue suited her well. Morgan Freeman brought some heat, but he played the same role he’s played a thousand times so don’t expect any Oscar noms for either of them.

With a run time of 89 minutes, it’s definitely not a waste of time, or money. I wasn’t blown away, but I enjoyed myself. The biggest bad indicator was that rather than talking about the film I had just seen it made me want to watch its older, more entertaining antecedent with my pal Brad Cooper. But hey, it’s still worth a watch.

South Lake Tahoe resident Jeremy Miller has more movie reviews online.

Candidates filing for November election

Candidates are slowly qualifying for the Nov. 4 ballot.

The filing period closes Aug. 8. It will be extended to Aug. 13 if an incumbent does not file or qualify.

New for Lake Tahoe Unified School District and Lake Tahoe Community College is that the five members now represent specific districts. That means people will only vote for one person for each of those entities.

Wendy David is the only South Lake Tahoe City Council candidate who has qualified for the ballot. Those who have taken out papers are Brooke Laine, Tom Davis, Angela Swanson, Bruce Grego, Austin Sass and Matt Palacio.

Dave Olivio has qualified for the ballot for city treasurer.

Suzie Alessi has taken out papers for city clerk.

Kerry David has qualified for District 1 for the LTCC board, Jeff Cowen for District 2, and Bob Grant and Michelle Sweeney for District 5.

LTUSD District 5 has Barbara Bannar on the ballot. No one has filed for area 2.

Chris Cefalu has qualified for director seat one for South Tahoe Public Utility District, Jim Jones for seat two, and Duane Wallace for seat five.

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2 hurt when helicopter crashes on Rubicon Trail

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

Two people suffered non-life-threatening injuries Friday afternoon when a helicopter assisting with the annual Jeepers Jamboree crashed along the Rubicon Trail.

Four people were on board. A man with head injuries and a man with leg injuries were flown to a Reno hospital, according the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office. Two other occupants were able to walk away from the crash.

Deputies assigned to the trail patrol arrived at the scene and confirmed that a helicopter was down near Buck Island Lake, approximately 7 miles from Loon Lake. This area is accessible only by modified four-wheel-drive vehicles, helicopters or on foot, according to a Sheriff’s Office news release.

Read the whole story

Oracle chief sells Tahoe estate for $20 mil.



The former Lake Tahoe home of billionaire Larry Ellison . Photo/Eric Jarvis

By Candace Taylor, Wall Street Journal

Oracle billionaire Larry Ellison has sold one of his Glenbrook properties for $20.35 million, according to public records.

The sale closed in mid-July and names the buyer as a California-based entity called Residential Property Mgmt LLC.

The property is one of three parcels Ellison had listed together for $28.5 million in 2013 with Jennie Fairchild of Chase International. It contains a 9,242-square foot main house, which Ellison spent three years remodeling, with six bedrooms, eight full baths and one half bath. There is a soundproof screening room, a gym, a billiard room, a library and a sauna. Also on the property is a 1,326-square-foot, two-bedroom, three-bath guest house.

The other two parcels – including a roughly 3,000-square-foot

lakefront house and an adjoining vacant lot – are still on the market, priced at $4.15 million, Fairchild said in an email. She declined to discuss the details of the sale.

Read the whole story

Wood-roasted coffee purveyor expands to Tahoe



Wood-Fire Roasted Coffee in now available in Lake Tahoe. Photo/Provided

By Lake Tahoe News staff

It all started with roasting coffee beans on a stovetop.

Tim Curry of Reno now operates Wood-Fire Roasted Coffee, an independent craft coffee roasting business, using an old-style Italian wood-fired roaster.

He just expanded into the Lake Tahoe market, with beans available at Overland Meats and Grassroots in South Lake

Tahoe, and Village Market in Incline Village.

Lake Tahoe News had two tasters rate four beans.

“Overall, I really liked this coffee and would be happy to buy at least two of the beans. I went with the dark first, my preference, but ended up being delighted by the Ethiopian,” Kim said.

Sue said, “Overall, coffee varieties from the Wood-Fire Roasted Co. made me feel like I was sitting in front of a campfire with my mug. The flavors were smooth and not burnt like some I’ve had with mass produced makers, namely Starbucks.”

Both tasted the coffees black. Kim then added cream to hers, while Sue added milk and sweetener.

Kim’s comments:

- Desperado: Deep and smooth with a nice, roasty finish and no bitterness. I’d buy this.
- Peru: It’s not bad. It’s a little thinner than Desperado, nutty with a tinny finish that’s not altogether unpleasant. It’s zippy, but not an experience.
- Ethiopian: Bright and fragrant, has depth, a little spicy. I like dark roasts, but I’d buy this light-to-medium roast for the flavors and aroma and I’d drink it in a silk robe.
- Honduran: Roasty, chocolaty. Mild and delicious. Every day coffee.

Sue’s comments:

- Desperado: My favorite. It has a deep, rich, nutty flavor like a good Merlot with a lingering effect. What’s rare, the milk even complemented the flavor of the coffee when I compared it to drinking it black.

Otherwise, drinking it black was like sucking on a coffee bean.

- Peru: It also has a lasting flavor, with a hint of chocolate and slight of nuttiness, much like the former, only milder.
- Honduras: A mixed a sense of nuttiness with vanilla.
- Ethiopian: It had a strong aroma with a dash of nutmeg in the flavor. What's different with this one is a definite citrus flavor that gave it a spark without compromising its ease of drinking it.

10-year-old shoots himself in hand in S. Tahoe

A California couple may face child endangerment charges because their grandson who was in their care nearly shot his little finger off.

The name and hometown of the people involved are not being released by South Lake Tahoe police officers.

"That fact that he has special needs could be considered by the DA to be more compelling toward (child endangerment)," police Lt. Brian Williams told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The 10-year-old was left alone in a vehicle at Staples on the afternoon of July 31 while his grandma shopped and grandpa let the dog out. During that time the boy went from the back seat to the front, opened the glove compartment and shot his little finger, according to officers.

Williams did not know if the child would lose his little finger.

The gun belongs to the grandfather, who is in law enforcement in California. He is authorized to carry a loaded firearm in a vehicle. The glove box, though, does not have a lock.

Officers took possession of the weapon.

It will be up to the District Attorneys Office if charges are filed.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Study details early tsunami event at Tahoe

By Andrew Alden, KQED-TV

Once upon a time, geologists tell us, a massive chunk of Lake Tahoe's West Shore collapsed into the water in a tremendous landslide. The water responded by sloshing high onto the surrounding shores in a series of landslide tsunamis. A major new study in the journal Geosphere adds much new detail to that story, tracing massive features around and beneath the lake. And it places the date of the fearsome event near the time that humans first visited it.

Lake Tahoe is a peaceful mountain resort area today, but its geologic past has been long and violent. Its very presence is due to tectonic stretching of the Earth's crust across Nevada, which has opened large basins from California's Sierra Nevada crest all the way to Salt Lake City. The Tahoe basin has been there for roughly 3 million years, during which time it's seen outbreaks of volcanism and countless major earthquakes.

Forty years ago the first sonar survey of Lake Tahoe showed

evidence that bite-shaped McKinney Bay, in the middle of the lake's western shore, is a scar left by a very large landslide and that huge pieces of that slide, as much as a kilometer long, are strewn across the lake bottom.

Since that time, as funding permits, geologists have sent submarine-mounted cameras into the lake and taken core samples of its sediment. They've also tramped the shores and mountainsides, mapping the signs the catastrophe left there.

The new paper in the August issue of the journal Geosphere, by veteran researchers James G. Moore, Richard Schweikert and Christopher Kitts, assembles the evidence old and new into a scenario of that convulsive day. Much of their paper represents significant progress on the Tahoe tsunami problem.

Read the whole story

Drought could alter craft beer business

By Brianna Sacks, Los Angeles Times
When Lagunitas Brewing Co. fills its beer bottles, Northern California's Russian River provides the main ingredient.

Lagunitas has become one of the fastest-growing stars of California's booming craft beer scene. But the Russian River is shrinking after three years of punishing drought.

"We are at the maximum growth threshold here in California because of water," said Leon Sharyon, chief financial officer for Lagunitas, which uses nearly 2 million gallons of river water a year at its Petaluma brewery.

Breweries run through an average of four to seven gallons of water to end up with one gallon of beer. With California in the midst of a water crisis, breweries are scrambling.

If this drought continues for two, three more years, that could greatly impact the production and growth of our breweries. – Tom McCormick, executive director of the California Craft Brewers Association

California is home to more than 400 craft brewers – the most in the country. They sold $4.7 billion worth of beer in 2012, about 17 percent of the state's total beer sales, according to the most recent statistics from the California Craft Brewers Association.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Kirk Hardie, co-founder and co-executive director of the Tahoe Institute for Natural Science, will lead a bird walk along the Rainbow Trail at Taylor Creek on the South Shore on Aug. 7 from 8-10am. Meet at the Taylor Creek Visitor Center building next to the Rainbow Trail sign.

• On Aug. 9, Pony Express re-riders will be on the Tahoe Rim Trail meeting with users to talk about the important role the Pony Express once played in the Sierra.

• Tahoe City Day is Aug 8, with a celebration from 5-8pm. For more info, go online.

• The Perseids meteor showers have begun. They are likely to be obscured at their peak Aug. 11 because of the full moon.

Blogger fired from language school over ‘homophonia’

By Paul Rolly, Salt Lake Tribune

Homophones, as any English grammarian can tell you, are words that sound the same but have different meanings and often different spellings – such as be and bee, through and threw, which and witch, their and there.

This concept is taught early on to foreign students learning English because it can be confusing to someone whose native language does not have that feature.

But when the social-media specialist for a private Provo-based English language learning center wrote a blog explaining homophones, he was let go for creating the perception that the school promoted a gay agenda.

Read the whole story